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BUILDING BRIDGES WITH PRACTICE: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF ELECTRONIC COMMERCE ISSUES

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The rapid growth of electronic commerce (EC) has created a new area of business characterized by confusion and lack of coherence (Whinston 1996). As a consequence, a wide variety of electronic commerce frameworks have attempted to give organization to the field; however, these frameworks have thus far been primarily speculative and are not based on strong theory or on empirical data. In addition, as with many fields, there is a fundamental question as to whether or not the research interests of the academic community are aligned with the research interests of industry.

This paper outlines an ongoing empirical research project to develop an applied electronic commerce research framework that will help bridge the research gap between academia and practice. As electronic commerce continues to become a more pressing issue for academics and practitioners, the need arises for a unification of research issues in EC so that currently unresolved issues can be addressed. Given this background, a two-phased research plan is developed to investigate the various issues in EC.

In phase one of the research, an ABI/INFORM index search was conducted to collect data about EC articles published in academic and industry journals during the period 1995 to 1997 in order to identify leading EC issues being addressed by both academics and practitioners. The list of leading EC issues from this search is then mapped onto the issues identified by existing frameworks to arrive at a comprehensive list of critical issues in EC for both academics and practitioners. This final list of critical EC issues includes security/authentication, electronic data interchange (EDI), applications of EC in practice, business potential of EC, and electronic payment.

In phase two of the research, a framework to assess and conduct applied EC research is developed. This framework is based on a synthesis of rich theoretical constructs from diverse areas such as organizational theory, political-economy, and transactional-cost economics and the list of critical EC issues identified in phase one. Validation of this framework will be done by administering a detailed questionnaire to senior IS and functional executives in leading *Fortune 500* companies in the U.S. Preliminary results of this study along with a set of recommendations for both academia and industry will be offered at the conference.

REFERENCE

Whinston, A. B.; Applegate, L. M.; Holsapple, C. W.; Kalakota, R.; and Radermacher, F. J. "Electronic Commerce: Building Blocks of New Business Opportunity," *Journal of Organizational Computing and Electronic Commerce* (6:1), June 1996, pp. 1-10.